News release

Helping bmi avoid delays

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Experts from the Met Office are helping a leading UK airline operator reduce avoidable delays by up to 80%, thanks to a new forecasting service.

bmi and the Met Office have been working on an innovative forecasting service which allows the airline to get timely warnings of when to get teams ready to de-ice their planes.

The service, evaluated at 12 bmi sites in February 2005, included forecasts of likely aircraft icing conditions for airports worldwide, together with a tailored guide to holdover times for customer-specified fluid types and proactive alerts to ground staff.

Results showed that the Met Office correctly forecast days on which icing would occur on 79% of occasions two days in advance. Detailed icing conditions in the critical morning departure period were correctly forecast on 85% of occasions six hours in advance.

bmi's Board of Directors was so convinced of the savings from the service — in terms of delay reduction — that the company now plans to use it at 14 of its main European bases. This winter, Met Office icing alerts will be sent direct to ground staff and de-icing suppliers, who will then go and de-ice based on the Met Office's decision, rather than their own.

Simon Mayes, bmi Maintenance Control Centre Manager said: "We have proven that the service helps make better- informed decision. The five-day icing warning is another valuable feature, helping us to highlight potential icing and start preparing days in advance of the event. We see the de-icing service as a fundamental part of our drive to reduce avoidable delays by 80%"

More information about Met Office Aviation services

Notes:
Airlines use special de-icing equipment and chemicals, which is an expensive business and a very difficult one to manage. If they de-ice too early, they might have to do it again before take off. If they leave it too late, they might not get all their aircraft cleared in time for take-off. To make matters worse, the timings involved vary according to the precise weather conditions. At an estimated cost of £50 per minute, delays can soon become a major burden to an airline's bottom line.

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